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REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the courtesy of Examiner Ghatt conducting a telephone interview with Applicants' representative on November 29, 2005. During the telephone interview, Applicants' representative described the Applicants' claimed invention, and proposed amendments to claim 1, including the following amendment: "wherein the sheet output rollers are disposed between the image forming section and the inner empty space." In a subsequent telephone conversation with Examiner Ghatt, it was indicated that this amendment would distinguish over the combination of Ohtsuki in view of Green.

Claims 1, 4, and 5 are pending in the application. Claim 1 has been amended by the present amendment. The amendment is fully supported by the specification as originally filed (see, e.g., FIGS. 1 and 3; and specification at page 13, second paragraph, and page 21, last paragraph to page 22, first paragraph).

As amended, claim 1 recites an image forming apparatus including a shifter mechanism incorporating sheet output rollers which are used as offset rollers, where the sheet output rollers are disposed between the image forming section and the inner empty space.

For example, as shown in FIG. 1 of the application, the image forming apparatus 100 includes a shifter mechanism 41 incorporating sheet output rollers 62a, 62b used as offset rollers (see FIG. 3), where the sheet output rollers are disposed between the image forming section 30 and the inner empty space of sheet delivery section 40.

Claims 1, 4, and 5 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,920,758 to Ohtsuki in view of U.S. Patent 5,513,839 to Green. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

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The proposed combination of Ohtsuki in view of Green does not teach or suggest an image forming apparatus in which sheet output rollers are disposed between an image forming section and an inner empty space.

Referring to FIG. 2 of Ohtsuki, a scanner unit 100 overhangs an image forming unit 200, and a space 300 is formed between the scanner unit 100 and the image forming unit 200 (see column 3, lines 27-32 and 56-58).

In Ohtsuki, copy paper is discharged into the space 300 "by way of a pair of paper discharge rollers 14" (column 4, lines 66-67). As shown in FIG. 2, the discharge rollers 14 are positioned above the photosensitive drum 1, transfer device 7, and fixing device 8 of the image forming unit 200. The discharge rollers 14 are also positioned above the bottom part 300a of the space 300.

Therefore, Ohtsuki does not teach or suggest an arrangement in which sheet output or discharge rollers are disposed "between the image forming section and the inner empty space," as recited in claim 1. In Ohtsuki, the discharge rollers 14 are positioned above both the image forming unit 200 and the bottom part 300a of space 300.

Even if the Green reference were somehow combined with Ohtsuki, the proposed combination would not teach or suggest an image forming apparatus in which the sheet output rollers are disposed between the image forming section and the inner empty space, as recited in claim 1.

Applicants' remarks in the Amendment filed on July 29, 2005 are incorporated by reference herein.

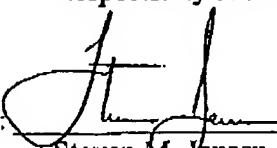
For at least the reasons discussed above, the proposed combination of Ohtsuki in view of Green would not teach or suggest the Applicants' claimed invention.

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It is believed that the claims are in condition for immediate allowance, which action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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